

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
February 9, 2022
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

Present: Chairman Susan Malan, Brian Weinstein, Robert Day, Tom Nichols, Jim Vineburgh and Tom Pinkowish.

Absent: Peter Decker

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Malan at 4:07 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion made by Brian Weinstein to approve the January 2022 minutes. Jim Vineburgh seconded.

INTRODUCTION:

Meeting was held virtually on Zoom.

Visitors: David Rosengren

Updates:

David Rosengren is joining us today to discuss the Cannabis Subcommittee. He is an attorney and is one of 3 on the committee.

David pointed out that when the legislature legalized marijuana, anyone in the state can use it without fear of getting criminal sanctions against them. There is a certain amount that you can carry.

Along with that, each town needs to decide through a planning and zoning subcommittee whether to allow a medicinal and/or recreational dispensary in their town. This needs to be determined in a year's time. If the town does nothing, then the law permits someone to come in and establish a facility. Right now, the planning and zoning committee had a vote to put everything on hold to study the issue. They created the subcommittee to outline the parameters in which this dispensary could be established in Essex. David said they have had three meetings so far. From David's perspective, it does look like it will be approved. But the committee will bring their finding to the planning and zoning committee when they are finished for them to have the final vote. Right now, they are discussing where it should or should not be, do we want just medicinal or can it be recreational as well or both. This discussion really is about the traffic that we may get from the dispensary. It looks like there are 3 areas it could be in: 1. Industrial. 2. Commercial or 3. Main St. District. Everyone feels it is not appropriate for the Main St. District as the traffic that it would cause would not be appropriate in that area.

Should the town allow growing? That is also another piece of it. Growing does not look like it will be approved but it needs to be discussed. If a dispensary does get approved in town, the town will receive 3% of the sales tax of products sold back.

Question was asked if other towns have approved it- some have and some have not. It looks like Old Saybrook is almost done with their approval.

The ACT is about 240 pages long, a lot of language to go through. Most deals with the licensing aspects of it. It also states it cannot be near certain businesses, schools for example. There are also tight controls on who they sell it to. The facility would need to keep record of all sales. If a medicinal facility is approved, there would need to be a pharmacist on site. Anyone interested in applying for a license, applies to the State, not the town itself. Based on Essex population, we could only have one dispensary in town. It was asked if we decide that it isn't for us, would there be any repercussions. David does not think there is a downside to saying no. Right now, even if it is approved, no one can open anything until July.

Planning and Zoning Report:

Susan did not get a report from Carey Duques this month. She plans to get them for the March meeting.

Susan mentioned that last month, there was discussion on the IGA building being leased. She looked into it and there is no one that is ready to lease the building at this time. It is still available. She mentioned that it needs a lot of work on the inside and it would need to be a person that would be able undertake that.

The Mail Mart in town will be closing at the end of the month. The owner has tried to sell it for the past couple years with no luck. It is a shame as it is very convenient, and it always seems quite busy.

Heritage Cove- for a couple years they have been trying to get the sidewalk and have applied for a federal grant. It does look like they are putting in the sidewalk soon.

Ferry St- the old antique store- friend of Tom's bought it. If anyone knows someone who is looking for a spot for their business. Discussion about the lack of parking may be hard to find someone to want to be there.

ACTION ITEMS:

Susan asked if all could bring to the March meeting ideas and thoughts for updates in the POCD.

OLD BUSINESS:

Covid-19 update- Meetings have been every other week. With the governor's mask mandate expiring the end of this month, maybe things can start getting back to a bit normal.

Plan of Conservation and Development- POCD- Susan asked if anyone had a chance to look it over. Jim said he went through the whole thing. He was surprised at how much the EDC is involved in it alone and with other commissions. It does describe the way the town looks like. Susan said EDC has a section and we should look that over with comments on how it should be refined.

Harbor Management Commission- Susan and Brian are on this commission. The HMC is updating the plan to make it clearer to assure DEEP doesn't over-ride HMC decisions.

NEW BUSINESS:

The exit numbers on Route 9 are being changed. Apparently there is a federal regulation that requires the exit numbers to correspond with the mile markers.

Upcoming Guests and Meeting Locations:

The next meeting will be Wednesday, March, 2022.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion was made by Jim Vineburgh to adjourn the meeting at 4:49 p.m. Tom Nichols seconded the motion. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cindy Sadlowski, Commission Clerk